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The reader who knows only the *Manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse*[1] is immediately struck by the predominant tone of these accounts of Jean Potocki's travels: analogies and resemblances to the famous novel are to be found on every hand. Thus a reading of the *Voyages*[2] can first of all point up to us several fo the author's sources and allow us a different approach to his fictional works. But Potocki was not a man limited to one genre, and his travels open up perspectives that are as rich as those of his novel. Whenever they leave the strictly literary domain these travels throw a great deal of light on the man who made them as well as on the period during which he lived.

Potocki's Islam

We shall begin with the literary analogies. The geographical locations in which the heroes of the *Manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse* move about – with the sole exception of Mexico – are familiar ones to the author. Even if he has not left an account of every single spot he visited, we do know that Potocki went to Spain, Italy, Malta, Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, and Tartary. Without exception, this is the world of the periphery of the Mediterranean, and it still touches Islam at close hand or at a distance.

[1] First published anonymously in French, partially in Saint Petersburg, partially in Paris, between 1805 and 1814. This largely forgotten novel was resurrected by Roger Caillois, who published selections from it in 1958 (Paris: Gallimard). An English translation of the entire novel by Elisabeth Abbott appeared in two volumes: *The Saragossa Manuscript* (New York Avon Books, 1960); *The New Decameron: further tales from the Saragossa Manuscript* (New York: Orion Press, 1967).

[2] In this essay all references are to my edition of Jean Potocki's *Voyages* (Paris: Fayard, 1980), 2 vols., with introduction and notes. Vol. I contains: *Voyages en Turquie et en Egypte, en Hollande, au Maroc*; Vol. II contains: *Voyages en Caucase et en Chine.*

Having established this first principle, which indeed defines the unity and exoticism of the novel, let us examine what the travels reveal about this omnipresent Orient. They convince us that the traveler not only visited the Orient but also steeped himself in Oriental culture. He owes this taste first of all to his geographic origin: his native province of Podolia, the easternmost in Poland before its partition, is in direct contact with the Moslems, the Turks, and the Tartars. If in France the Orient has been a fashion ever since the *Lettres Persanes*[3] and *The Thousand and One Nights* (as translated into French by Galland), for Potocki it is a familiar universe. He speaks Turkish, knows the fundamentals of Arabic and Persian, and even practices writing these languages. On several occasions during the course of his life he will propose establishing schools of Oriental languages.[4]

Every reader of the *Manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse* can easily perceive that Moslem civilization has more than a local-color role. As soon as he leaves for Turkey, in 1784, Potocki insists that he is already "nourri par l'étude de l'histoire et de la littérature des Orientaux" (I, 56). During this trip he reiterates: «les lectures que j'ai faites depuis près de deux ans m'ont rendu si riche en pensées orientales que je n'ai eu que la peine d'en grouper quelques-unes» (I, 68). In 1791 in Morocco we find him pursuing rare editions of Hebrew texts, such as the commentary of the *Talmud* by Jehoudah Levi el Khozari, or Arabic ones such as *Giafar et Barmeki*. If the philosophy of the two sisters Emina and Zibeddé, the beautiful and perverse temptresses who constantly beseige Alphonse van Worden,[5] is so inviting, it is because Potocki refuses to see the Oriental only as the Barbarian and destroyer of the Christian cult. His approach attempts to be sympathetic, and at times is even idyllic. The very manner in which the narratives of the *Manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse* are introduced often betrays

[3] Published in 1721 by Montesquieu.

[4] Exercises in his handwriting are to be found in the Jagellonne Library in Krakow, Ms. 3314.IV.38. He delights in writing in Arabic to Marie Potocka, née Rzewuska, whose brother Waclaw is an ardent student of things oriental. See their correspondance: Archives of the P.A.N., Krakow, N° 6183.

[5] Young Flemish hero of the *Manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse*.

their Oriental origins with that «vérité ... [qui] paraît chercher plutôt à s'épancher qu'à se répandre,» with the poetry which is «employée ... à ramener sans cesse à la nature,» those allegories «inventées dans l'Orient pour mettre la pensée à l'abri des premières fureurs du despotisme» (I, 73). The gentle, even rhythmic, tone which fears excess and avoids the «état de prétention» in which the so-called civilized Occidental so willingly ensconses himself is proof that Potocki, having been shaped by his travels, always seeks to attain «l'état de simplicité» he has observed among the Moors of Morocco, whom he has cast as the heroes of his novel (here we may recall the Gomelez clan or the Ceuta of Velasquez, the mathematician). Such a tone naturally owes a great deal to classic French sobriety, also much admired by Potocki, but who can say just what part the allusive apologues in the manner of Saadi play in all this?

Travel and Movement

In any consideration of the structure of Count Jean's novel one cannot help noticing that the way the text is cut up into «days» («journées») is as conventional as the division of the letters in his *Voyage en Turquie*. The epistolary form of the account is as artificial as the diary structure found in the *Voyage au Maroc,* or later in the *Voyage dans les Steppes d'Astrakhan et du Caucase* (1791). Much more basic here is the well-known influence of the picaresque novel and the educational novel, but the one and the other are inconceivable without the travel experience. When we read of the tribulations of Van Worden, it is Potocki we see in the Sierra Morena: if ever the travel notes he made in Spain and Portugal turn up again we shall doubtless have an important source of the *Manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse.*[6] Even without them it is easy to see what a major part travel routes and roads play in the *Manuscrit:* what hosts of gypsies, wanderers, and bandits, and all of them itinerants too! Move-

[6] These travel notes have not yet come to light, but in 1877 they were in the archives of Wilanów castle. See H. Skimborowicz i W. Gerson, *Album widoków i pamiątek,* Warszawa, 1877.

ment, with its corollary, encounter, are the very bases of the novel; and indeed they constituted the guiding principle of the author's life. Fénelon, to be sure, had already based the education of his Télémaque on travel, and Barthélémy, whom Potocki so much admired, also sent the young hero of his *Anacharsis en Grèce* out onto the highways of the world, following the model of Lesage's *Gil Blas*. But how many authors have extended their *Wanderjahre* throughout their entire life and made their encounters with the Other the principle of all enrichment?

Without this travel fever the kaleidoscopic movement of the *Manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse* would not exist; nor would the numerous *mises en abyme* through which the trip within a trip manages to ease the difficulty of seeing everything for oneself. The form of the tale embedded within a tale thus appeared well before the *Manuscrit*, in fact as early as 1784, in the *Voyage en Turquie*. Along the way there is always someone who has seen something more and whose accounts must be worked into the whole, all of which, whether here or there, brings us back to an Orient actually experienced and witnessed by the same sharp observer. For what could be more Oriental than the tale or fable inserted within the narrative?

In Morocco "trips within a trip" have a decidely documentary character that will become more pronounced in the Caucasus, but in Turkey and in Egypt the manner of turning the external story is quite akin to that used by Van Worden's wayfaring companions: «Je ne sais trop comment vous trouverez les apologues Orientaux. Pour moi, je raffole de leur manière, et je m'y suis essayé,» Potocki writes to his mother from Constantinople (I, 68). If, as the legend would have it, the *Manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse* was first conceived as a sort of extension of *The Thousand and One Nights*, which the author used to tell to his sick wife, then one can easily see the persistence of the obsession with the Orient.

Enlightened Œcumenism

More than the form it is the basic material that establishes the kindship of the travels and the novel. The central theme of the

Manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse, the key to the sixty-six "days", the Gomelez treasure, is to be found quite intact in "The Trial of Draco", a fable included in the "Seventh Letter" of the *Voyage en Turquie* (I, 66). It is the idea of the relativity of religions. Just as Alphonse is put to the test, unbeknownst to himself, in order to bring about perhaps a harmonious synthesis of Christianity and Islam, so Draco is summoned by a vizir to state which religion is the better. Now he finds the same response to the same question, and it is one frequently encountered in Podolia: the futility of the struggles between the cross and the crescent (and there will be other examples, severely repressed by the Tzar around 1827).[7] The gold mine that was supposed to insure the future and power of the Gomelez clan of course finally turns out to be exhausted and useless, thus bearing witness to the vanity of the Moorish religion's goal of trying to dominate the Christian or Jewish faiths. This idea is fully present in Draco's parable, in the story of the miners who «avaient cru découvrir une mine de métaux précieux. Se creusant chacun des routes différentes, ils espéraient tous parvenir un jour à s'en rendre les maîtres. Après un travail long et assidu leurs lampes s'étaient éteintes, mais leur ardeur était telle que, loin de s'en apercevoir, ils criaient encore comme auparavant: ‹c'est moi qui ai trouvé l'or, les autres n'out que le cuivre et l'étain›» (I, 67).

In this vain quest for the Absolute, the Ideal, the Synthesis of religions or philosophies, one is struck by the repetitive character of the mine theme, the subterranean chamber, the bowels of the earth. May it not be significant to note that Jean Potocki, finding himself in a ruined tower in Morocco, seems to suggest already in what direction he will lay out the intrigue of his *Manuscrit?*

> Je commence à m'arranger dans ma tour ruinée. Cette pittoresque et mélancolique demeure me rappelle les goules qui, selon la mythologie des *Mille et Une Nuits*, habitaient les édifices abandonnés. A côté de ma casemate, il y a une porte qui conduit à un souterrain très

[7] In 1827 the University of Wilno (Vilna) created a committee to judge and condemn the author of a treatise dealing with the necessity of a syncretic union of Christendom and Islam. The author, like Potocki, was Podolian. See Daniel Beauvois, *Lumières et société en Europe de l'est 1803–1832* (Paris-Lille, 1977), vol. II, 855.

> profond. C'était autrefois une de ces terribles matamores où l'on enfermait les esclaves chrétiens et dont il est tant question dans les romans espagnols, ouvrages où il y a bien de l'imagination, mais pas autant que dans les contes que j'ai cités plus haut et qu'il faut toujours lire lorsque l'on se trouve avec des Arabes. (I, 294)

This text dating from 1791 offers us already the full apparatus of the future novel: the Hispano-Moorish setting, the historical recollections, the mythological creatures, all brought together in such a way that fear and trembling join forces and merge with the marvelous.

Greatness and Vanity of Knowledge

It is known that Potocki's trip to Spain followed close upon his trip to Morocco. And there seems to be little doubt that the essential material of his *Manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse* was the harvest gathered during these travels; but it is quite surprising to learn that the often pessimistic philosophy expressed in the novel by Velasquez or Hervas is in fact that of the young traveler in Morocco. Potocki, a marvelous illustration of the governing idea of Paul Hazard on travels as a source of 18th-century relativism, never stops pointing out that his peregrinations are responsible for his skepticism. If Don Belial[8] very naturally hits upon the Oriental parable of the tiger and the sheep faced with the wisp of grass in order to express the relativity of justice, it is because Potocki constantly comes back to his Oriental reminiscences. The inventory of these images and parables remains to be taken. But, in the other direction, and starting with the travels, it is just as easy to anticipate precisely what the general doubt expressed in the *Manuscrit* will be. Not only religions, not only justice, but science itself is taken to task by an erudite Potocki as early as 1791, when he is only thirty years old. Are we not indeed entitled to see a first rough sketch of the pilgrim Hervas - the pilgrim, yet another image linked to travel! - in the tale of *Hafez,* which follows close upon the trip to Morocco? This entire story, which evolves around the "trop savant Abou Hanifah" who goes

[8] A character in the *Manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse* («Histoire du terrible pèlerin Hervas et de son père, l'omniscient impie»).

to Bagdad «pour y publier le soixante-dixième volume de son *Bahr-al-nour*, ou l'Océan des Lumières,» (I, 313) offers a prefiguration of the lassitude of the «Omniscient blasphemer» facing knowledge disincarnate, facing scientific and encyclopedic sums that can never beget happiness. Hafez, incarnating Potocki here, declares: «Je me suis beaucoup occupé d'études abstraites et je voyage aujourd'hui autant pour m'en distraire que pour ajouter la connaissance des hommes aux connaissances que j'ai puisées dans les livres» (I, 317). Potocki thus describes his steps as a quest analogous to Van Worden's; he seeks people out in order to experiment, to study real life and the possibilities of happiness.

Gratification in Ambiguity

Experiencing love thus becomes inevitable and, here too, imagery as well as sentiments echo back and forth between the *Voyages* and the *Manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse*. The story entitled Abdul et Zeila, included in the *Voyage en Turquie*, with its garland of sultanas, faintings down in a cistern - which is, after all, a tunnel of sorts - and its erotic celebrations, made all the more pleasing for being unexpected, anticipates the delights that the lascivious sisters hold in store for young Alphonse van Worden: «Déjà l'enfant de la grappe s'unissait dans leurs coupes à la fille des nuées, l'amour était dans leurs yeux, les doux propos dans leurs bouches. Abdul crut un instant avoir goûté par avance les plaisirs du Gehennet» (I, III). Not only does this delightfully frivolous style accompany the same type of scenes on either hand, but also the moral they express is identical. Roger Caillois has remarked how Potocki's description of pleasure is always more vivid when the situations are ambiguous, or more acute when ineluctable, objective circumstances make the enjoyment innocent, as it were. The innumberable situations of this type to be found in the *Manuscrit:* the role of dreams, enchantments, such as the magic sweets that transform Celia and Sorilla into daemonic temptresses[9] - all have their prototype in the accounts of

[9] Two characters in «Histoire du terrible pèlerin Hervas» (see n.8). The first complete edition of the extraordinarily fragmented original French text of the *Manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse* is now being prepared

the travels in Turkey. The Orient seen in these writings is colored with the same undefinable poetry in which depravity resolves itself into a smiling hedonistic morality. Young Fatmé is married to handsome young Cassem, but she is in no wise guilty for having spent a few delirious moments in the arms of the rich Omar, since she has unwittingly been led into this situation by the crafty procuress Emina.[10] This equivocal attitude, quite expected in the 18th century of Manon Lescaut and Mme. de Merteuil, is avidly cultivated in the somewhat sublimated Orient Potocki insists on seeing in Turkey and Morocco before being repeated *ad infinitum* in his literary fictions. All these scenes are bathed in the idyllic light Mother Nature provides in order to absolve all the weaknesses of the flesh. The sequence of events seems to be materminded by that natural force, reminiscent of Rousseau, which amounts to a new Providence.

It would no doubt be quite possible to go much further with the thematic typology that Potocki the writer drew from the experiences of the Orientalist traveler. At all events his sense of relativity and his moral and political skepticism seem, along with his sense of the fantastic, fear, and trembling, to be the essential acquisitions of this experience.

From Words to Action

Spinning tales of thieves, pirates, and lovely Oriental maidens, however artistic, philosophical, or profound they may have been, finally began to seem rather futile to Potocki. By a particular twist that we find in most enlightened minds of the time Potocki, around 1795, began to perceive literature as a ludic activity more properly indulged in almost secretly and quite aside from serious pursuits of public usefulness. This bent doubtless accounts for the very limited Saint Petersburg edition of the 1805 decameron,[11], and the fact the notes of his travels in the Caucasus and in China remained unpublished in his lifetime. Moreover, the style of these travel accounts written after 1795 differs radically from that of the earlier ones and bears witness to the veritable dichotomy that is taking place in Count Jean's concepts. Whereas the trips to Turkey, Egypt, and Morocco, undertaken when Poland was still in existence as a nation, closely blend the accounts of real-life experience and various other considerations, even fiction – that is to say the useful with the pleasurable – it would seem that as soon as Potocki began composing the *Manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse* he invested in it the greater part of whatever brilliance, fantasy, and imagination his genius may have boasted. This mutation concides with Potocki's passing over to the Russian side, he the former cosmopolitan Pole now growing ever more captivated with power and politics. Not that such preoccupations had been entirely foreign to his interests before, but they emerge from their secondary and occasional positions – one recalls his activity during the Great Diet of 1788–1792 – to become obsessive and omnipresent.

The Count's new sense of belonging to a strong empire, which he quickly put on the same footing with undertaking to federate all Slavic peoples, satisfies his yearning for a new universality, and his family's high position kindled his hopes of playing a much greater personal role in this endeavor than he had been able to in a Poland that no longer existed. Until about 1808 everything he writes bears the mark of a feverish urge to give practical sanction to his knowledge of things Oriental. Pretty arabesques no longer satisfy him except in the secret of his study, like some play or sport that must be kept hidden. Nowhere does he speak of his work on the *Manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse*, whose "romantic" plots (as he styles it), *i.e.* novelistic plots, are not proper interests for a man who wishes to pursue a career.

by M.-E. Zoltowska-Weintraub. In the meantime we refer to the Polish translation by C. E. Chojecki, *Rękopis znaleziony w Saragossie*, edited by M. Toporowski, 1950, III, 104.

[10] *Voyages*, I, 61.

[11] For the basic facts surrounding the complicated publication of the *Manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse*, see: Roger Caillois, preface to the 1967 edition (Paris: Gallimard); Will L. McLendon, *Une Ténébreuse carrière sous l'Empire et la Restauration: le Comte de Courchamps* (Paris: Lettres Modernes, 1981), ch. V; Will L. McLendon, "A Problem in Plagiarism: Washington Irving and Cousen de Courchamps," *Comparative Literature*, XX (Spring 1968), 157–69.

Everything undertaken by Potocki during the fifteen years following the annexation of his estates by Russia is dictated by the need for action, by ambition, and service to the Tzar.[12] He says as much once more to his brother, on October 17, 1805, upon leaving for China: «Si l'on ne veut pas de moi, j'ai dans la littérature de quoi me consoler amplement. Mais la seule littérature qui me donnait beaucoup de plaisir ne me donnait pas de considération, qui est un besoin à notre âge» (II, 205). At this the very dawn of the 19th century the status of the novelist is less than nothing, and Count Potocki looks elsewhere in his hope to satisfy this need for public respect which he feels acutely because the reputation that has hounded him since his youth is that of a genteel eccentric. While still in China he writes back: «Je suis ... fort content ... d'avoir mêlé un peu de politique à ma science, car celle-ci vous fait estimer de vos pairs, sinon tous vos entours vous regardent comme un fou qui ne peut être bon à personne, ce qui à la longue est fâcheux» (II, 206). The same nagging fear of being taken for a madman is to be observed in the erudite Velasquez and his father, two characters in the *Manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse*.

The First Structural Anthropologist

And this is why the style of the travels in the Caucasus and in China changes so much. Instead of the charming excursions previously recorded, all placed under the sign of fantasy, philosophy, or poetry, we now have texts that are rigorously researched and verified - the final version of the travels in the Causasus was written in 1806 or 1807, ten years after the actual trip - and written from a precise perspective: the systematic exploration of the countries visited, these details recorded with an eye to preparing the invasion, then the annexation of the described territories.

Naturally an author like Potocki does not give up writing well

[12] Daniel Beauvois, «Un Polonais au service de la Russie: Jean Potocki et l'expansion en Transcaucasie 1804-1805,» *Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique*, E.H.E.S.C., 19: 1-2 (janv.-juin 1978), 175-89; et «Le *Système asiatique* de Jean Potocki ou le rêve oriental dans les empires d'Alexandre I et Napoléon,» *Ibid.*, 20: 3-4 (juil.-déc. 1979), 467-85.

just because he changes goals. To be sure the perspective he has adopted requires him to become an ethnologist - the first perhaps to envisage in so modern a manner a "grid" of problems encompassing life styles, habitat, consumption of goods and exchanges - but the literary vein constantly breaks through. Yet this vein itself is integrated into the general scheme of political usefulness and is curiously subverted.

In the steppes that lead him to Astrakhan, for example, Potocki cannot remain insensitive to the ambience of the Tumen horde, to be found also among the gypsies of Pandesowna in the *Manuscrit*. His taste for the fantastic and his fascination with the irrational force him to take note of various phenomena that lead him away from his scientific inquiries. Take, for instance, the thieving dog that is perhaps a devil incarnate and that would justify one's probing into the «métaphysique de l'histoire des animaux» (II, 38). In Astrakhan he observes a mosaic of Oriental peoples and again lets his literary acumen shine through: all these peoples, he says, have a taste for love and love songs that surpasses what one finds in Madrid or Cadiz. The ruins of Djid-Hadgi, on the banks of the Volga, awaken his taste for horror and shuddering. Similarly, in China, during a break in the political fabric, we learn about the adventures of young Gouriev, who has been attacked by robbers and bound to a tree: «scènes intéressantes à un roman à la Radcliffe,» but the scene is visibly being put aside for future use (II, 197).

Without this literary sense and his strong imagination, Potocki would not have managed to achieve the daring and brilliant extrapolations of his travels to the Caucasus, principally as concerns the interpretation of myths and the links between ancient and modern populations. Georges Dumezil procedes in the very same fashion when he builds his famous model of tri-functional civilization (sovreignty/war/production) on a similar method of comparison. Anticipating Bergson, Potocki makes of intuition based on an immense culture a means of acquiring knowledge and, in this respect, the kinship between the taste for grandiose systems that appears in the *Manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse* and the attempts at cultural syntheses to be found in the travels to the Caucasus bear witness to the unity of his thought.

This way of rediscovering myths underneath the details of real-life experience is indeed quite structuralist.

Knowledge and Imperialism

Even when he is observing phenomena that previously would most certainly have furnished him picturesque materials, Potocki bends his pen to the ideological goals he has set for himself. The countless thieves and bandits that are talked about and whom he observes among the Tchetchenes, the Ingouchs, and the Tcherkesses are no longer endowed with the charms of adventure; instead they become instigators and supporters of troubles that obstruct the advent of Russian order and Governmental Reason; they blindly kill and massacre their fellow men. The portraits of bandits in the *Voyage au Caucase* have then the opposite connotation of those found in the *Manuscrit,* and they serve as legal justifications for Russian intervention in «la balance politique du Caucase.» This in particular is what Alexander Pushkin, another enthusiast of Russian expanionism in the Trans-Caucasus, appreciated in Potocki's accounts when Klaproth published them in 1829; he notes in his *Voyage à Erzeroum*, written in 1835 that the Count's scientific research "is as captivating as his Spanish novels."[13]

The Potocki of the latter years is thus a profoundly divided man, and this inward wavering between a work of fiction that is absorbing but confidential and a will for brilliant political action must surely account in part for the final psychic breakdown.

The pride he derives from knowing that he is the best Orientalist in the Russian Empire leads him in December 1804 to solicit from the Tzar a position in the Asiatic Department. No sooner has he obtained this appointment than he dreams of becoming director of the Department; his entire trip to China in 1805–1806 bears the stamp of this obsession. In order to justify such an ambition he can indeed congratulate himself on having already successfully completed a part of his expansionist projects: thanks to the support of his compatriot and relative, the minister Czartoryski, he has managed to resume the campaign against Persia that was interrupted by Paul I. And the result is not negligible: General Tsitsianov has gotten himself killed attacking Bakou, but that city, along with the whole of Azerbiadjan, is henceforth Russian. His reading is now turned toward the Western theoreticians of colonization, Hogendrop in particular, and toward theoreticians of liberal economics, whom he is the first in Russia to discover, albeit somewhat obliquely through Jean-Baptiste Say.

Once can readily understand why Potocki's letters from China, even though they are written in his inimitable style and are still full of astute observations, no longer have much in common with novelistic literature. They are, nevertheless, quite interesting to analyze in order to mark just how the Enlightenment vocabulary undergoes, at this stage, in the minds of aristocrats inspired by Joseph de Maistre - Maistre and Potocki were constantly in one another's company in Saint Petersburg - a radical semantic reversal. The Orient - and particularly Asia - no longer has the refined exotic charm that Potocki lent it in his first travel logs. It has turned into a land to be colonized. "Civilization" must be brought in, *i.e.*, it must be opened to trade with the only nation that has managed, after the shipwreck of all values in France, to preserve the Enlightenment: the Russia of Alexander I. The Caucasian countries, Armenia and Georgia especially, as well as Siberia and China, need to be policed, which is to say they must be brought to respect the forces of order that the Russians will impose. The political "realism" expressed in these travels is nothing more than the quiet cynicism we read in the *Système Asiatique* that is preoccupying Potocki during these same years. Therein our traveler's mind is lulled and comforted with even more grandiose and more disturbing perspectives: in succession we find plans for the invasions of Persia, India, and China. Rousseau and the "moralists" are rejected with scorn, and with great fanfare it is proclaimed that, in any event, «toute souveraineté remonte à une usurpation.»[14]

[13] Aleksandr Sergeyevich Pushkin, *Oeuvres Complètes* (in Russian: *Polnoe sobranie socinenii v desjati tomah*) (Moscow, 1964), VI (prose), 652.

[14] *Voyages,* II, 193, and in general the entire account of the trip to China.

After his protector Czartoryski falls from political grace in 1806, whatever efforts Potocki makes to maintain his position in Asiatic affairs are doomed to failure. After 1808, cut off from the political action he so much longed for and deprived of the possibility of undertaking new travels, he pines, wastes away under the gnawing skepticism which he has harbored for so long, and is reduced to suicide. And so the accounts of his travels throw an indispensible light upon that universal relativity and doubt so often expressed in the *Manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse*. The travels also attest to the omnipresent character of the Orient in the life and works of an author who too readily – or too early – thought that he could pass from literary dilettantism to the most cynical political domination. And finally the travels bear witness to that terribly rare moment in the history of thought when reason and sensitivity, far form the sterilizing imperatives that are to follow, mutually confront one another and foreshadow a strikingly modern anthropological totality.

(Translated by Will L. McLendon)